

# Setting of benchmarks and code of ethics welcomed

THE cabinet decision to implement new measures to regulate social workers has been welcomed by various welfare and community groups.

They felt that the move to streamline and regulate the job scope of social workers would make the profession efficient, effective and professional.

Social work organisations said the move would also ally misconceptions about the services.

Theresa Symons, executive director of Good Shepherd, a charitable body, said the measures would encourage more people to join the social workforce as they would have proper accreditation and qualifications. "It will ensure that clients receive better services," she said.

On possible drawbacks, Symons said so long as these measures were planned and carried out correctly, it would see positive development.

Nazlina Abdul Ghani of the Women's Aid Organisation commended the move to streamline the syllabus in higher education institutions.

"When I was studying for my social work degree at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, it was one of three institutions offering courses in social work."

Nazlina hoped the new measures would encourage more tertiary institutions to offer more social work courses.

"Education is really important because it's very difficult to find in any welfare agency, people with the right skills and knowledge. And this will affect the services they provide."

Pastor Andrew Wong, chief executive officer of Holistic Integrated Services Bhd, said he was overjoyed with the move. "It has been more than 30 years since the Social Workers Association

started talking about setting up a set of competency standards, so it's been a long time coming."

"It's high-time this overworked and under-rewarded section of society is recognised as professionals."

Wong said the Social Workers Act and competency standards would promote healthy competition.

"Because a benchmark has been set, you need to meet a certain set of requirements or qualifications to be a social worker."

He said it would also help to weed out those who were not genuinely passionate about the work as it was a lifelong commitment.

Wong suggested the establishment of a Code of Ethics as the move would enhance transparency and accountability.



Pastor Andrew Wong says it's about time overworked social workers are recognised

Nazlina Abdul Ghani hopes the move will boost the number of social work courses at universities

preacted the government's concern to protect the interest of those receiving social services and ensure appropriate competencies, the measures must ensure that all focus related to social work were properly geared to embrace the change and legislation.

Lim questioned the impact the Social Workers' Act would have on volunteers without qualifications involved in social work.

"It is crucial to provide education and preparation suited at their level of responsibilities in their services delivery."

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## Pekerja sosial berkualiti mampu tangani sebagai gejala negatif

Kementerian utama keselamatan, perlindungan rakyat

Sebagai para, Malaysia mempunyai lebih 1200 pekerja sosial dengan hanya 300 orang dibayar atau 25 peratus. Jumlah ini menunjukkan bahawa sektor ini masih memerlukan perhatian yang lebih. Kementerian utama keselamatan, perlindungan rakyat akan memastikan bahawa pekerja sosial yang berkualiti mampu tangani sebagai gejala negatif.

Untuk jangka masa yang panjang, kerajaan akan memastikan bahawa pekerja sosial yang berkualiti mampu tangani sebagai gejala negatif. Kerajaan akan memastikan bahawa pekerja sosial yang berkualiti mampu tangani sebagai gejala negatif.

Untuk jangka masa yang panjang, kerajaan akan memastikan bahawa pekerja sosial yang berkualiti mampu tangani sebagai gejala negatif. Kerajaan akan memastikan bahawa pekerja sosial yang berkualiti mampu tangani sebagai gejala negatif.

**Tidaklah intensiti dan penyediaan numerik mampu kerja profesional dan berkepakatan dalam kerja sosial**

Shahrizat Abdul Jalil

BERKUALITI mampu tangai sebagai gejala negatif sebagai langkah untuk mengatasi masalah ini.

## Social work Good for practice to be regulated

THE Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW) is glad to learn that the government has endorsed the establishment of the National Social Work Competency Standards and the enactment of the Social Workers Act to regulate the practice in Malaysia.

MASW has worked in partnership with the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, the Department of Social Welfare and social work educators since 2004 to develop competency standards with the expertise of Dr Pauline Meemoduma, an Australian social work consultant.

MASW has also engaged the support of Dr David Jones, President of the International Federation of Social Workers in this initiative.

While MASW is mindful of the increasing pressure on social workers to perform well, it is also concerned about the multidimensional needs of people with problems. Setting standards and regulating professional services will not only enhance public confidence in the practitioner's competence to provide service, but also allow for public grievances if service is less than satisfactory.

At the same time, practitioners, both in the government and non-government sectors, will have clearer benchmarks to guide them. The Social Workers Act will also regulate the quality outcome of social work education to ensure that all educators are trained and experienced, and all graduates have the basic competencies to begin practice.

**TEOH AI HUA and ELSIE LEE**  
President and immediate past president of Malaysian Association of Social Workers

## Proposed Social Workers Act gets the Govt's nod

By IZATUN SHARI  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The proposed Social Workers Act, aimed at regulating and ensuring the quality of social care, has been approved by the Government.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Dato Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said the Cabinet had also approved the ministry's proposal to establish the national social work competency standards.

"Social problems such as child abuse, baby dumping and the increase in the number of beggars are getting more complex."

"Such problems require intervention from social workers who are well-trained, competent, experienced and professional," she told reporters at her ministry here yesterday.

Shahrizat said the ministry would finalise the draft of the Act and also the national social work competency standards.

"The national social work competency will be based on international standards. We are now working on it with an international consultant from Australia."

She said the ministry would also discuss with the Higher Education Ministry to ensure the curriculum in social work degrees offered by seven local universities comply with the competency standards.

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# Shahrizat: Standards for social work timely

By B. Suresh Ram  
SPECIAL TO THE STRAITS TIMES

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The increasing complexity of social problems requires skilled and trained professionals to respond and cater to the needs of target groups.

At such, the move by the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry to introduce the National Social Work Competency Standards was well timed, said the minister, Senator Dato Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

She said there was a need for social workers to be differentiated from charity workers who conduct voluntary work in community settings.

"Charity work is considered an act of kindness and generosity, and is a highly valued aspect of humanity in any society."

"Social workers are professionals who are trained to respond to the physical, emotional and social problems of individuals."

Shahrizat said as such, their performances were assessed through strict adherence to the National Competency Standards for Social Work Practice in Malaysia as well as the Social Workers Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct.

"The timeliness and relevance of this move is reflected in the results of a National Study on Social Work Services conducted by the Social Welfare Department in 2005, which indicated that less than 10 per cent of all social service providers are qualified," Shahrizat said in a statement yesterday.

She said the National Social Work Competency Standards would ensure the delivery of quality social welfare and social work services in the human service sector.

"The standards will serve as a benchmark against which practices and services can be measured."

"This benchmark will enable Malaysia to develop and implement effective protocols and procedures for monitoring practice, resolving grievances and complaints, as well as evaluating services."